



State of Arizona Department of Homeland Security



Governor Janet Napolitano

Director Leesa Berens Morrison

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FRAUD ID TASK FORCE BREAKS MANUFACTURING RINGS

PHOENIX: The Governor's Arizona Homeland Security Fraudulent Identification Task Force (AFIT), in a multi-agency investigation, served multiple search warrants this morning in Tempe, Sierra Vista, and Tucson. During this ongoing 3-month investigation confidential informants and undercover officers were able to purchase forged U.S. Social Security Cards, U.S. Permanent Resident Cards, and a Sonora Drivers License.

"Today's operation further demonstrates the importance of coordinated efforts in tackling the manufacturing and distribution of fraudulent IDs," said Governor Janet Napolitano. "The partnerships established between federal, state and local jurisdictions continue to produce results." AFIT's partnership with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in this investigation resulted in the uncovering of one of the largest manufacturers of fraudulent identification in Southern Arizona.

This investigation examined a large employer in southern Arizona, operating in the Sierra Vista area. The managers/owner of this business would send undocumented workers to two manufacturers of fraudulent documents to obtain fictitious identification/work documents. For about \$200 cash, the manufacturers would photograph the undocumented worker and obtain counterfeit employment documents for them. The undocumented worker would be paid in cash until they had fictitious Resident Alien and Social Security Cards. Then they would be added to the payroll.

Identification numbers used on forged documents sold by defendants to undercover officers, such as Social Security Administration account numbers, have been found in various state of Arizona benefit databases and are believed to have been repeatedly re-used on forged documents sold to numerous other people to gain financial benefit.

Arizona Department of Homeland Security Director Leesa Berens Morrison is particularly satisfied with the results of this multi-agency probe into the manufacturing/distribution of the fake IDs. "Identifying, arresting, and prosecuting the manufacturers and sellers of fraudulent immigration documents is a critical step in stemming human smuggling" Morrison said.

State law enforcement officials served five search warrants at five locations. In Tempe alone, where two of the search warrants were served, law enforcement officials uncovered an operation that yielded templates and cardstock capable of producing 2,500 resident alien cards; 2,500 social security cards; as well as cardstock to produce fake Arizona and Sonora, Mexico drivers' licenses. Also recovered from the Tempe locations were two (2) firearms.

AFIT's goal is to disband fraudulent networks and prevent illegal immigrant access to illegal resources. AFIT targets the illegal manufacturing and distribution (sales) of state, federal and foreign fraudulent identification, and criminally prosecutes employers who knowingly hire undocumented aliens.

The following agencies played a significant role in this investigation: Arizona Department of Homeland Security, Department of Liquor and License Control, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Economic Security, Department of Transportation – Office of the Inspector General, Department of Corrections, Department of Gaming, Department of Juvenile Corrections, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Customs, Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, U.S. Department of State – Diplomatic Security Services, Arizona Attorney General's Office, Cochise County Sheriff's Department, Pima County Sheriff's Department, Sierra Vista Police Department, Tucson Police Department, Tempe Police Department, and Phoenix Police Department.

Film footage of search warrants served today in Tempe in conjunction with AFIT is available at the Arizona Department of Homeland Security Web site, www.azdohs.gov or by clicking on the following link: <http://www.azgfd.gov/video/NonGF/index.html>. Attached are the results of AFIT's operation today and AFIT statistics since its July 2005 inception.

Individuals with information about false documents can call 1-866-X FAKE ID or 1-866-932-5343.

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